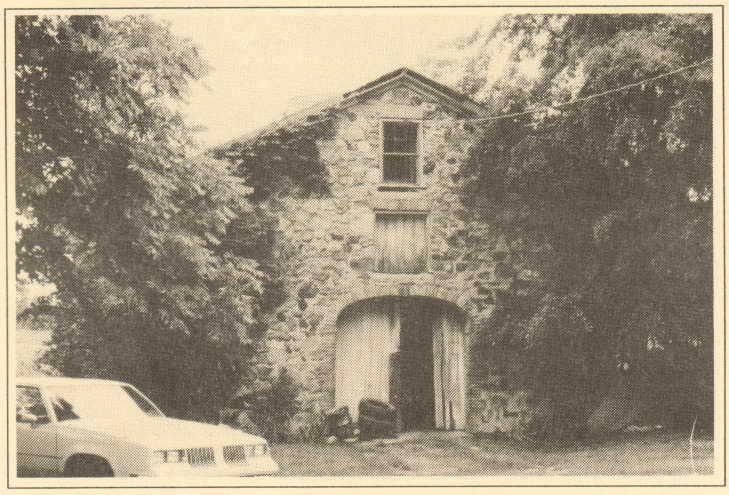
WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY - Founded December 17, 1857 SEPTEMBER 1995

WASHTENAW IMPRESSIONS

Photo by Ina Hanel



This stone barn on the Porter-Keeler-Esch farm on Jacob Road in Sharon Township may be unique in Michigan. Bearning a date of 1853, the barn is now deteriorating.

"It is very much like an English coaching barn," Prof. Ted Ligibel told WCHS bus tour-goers. See page 2 for more about tour.

WCHS THANKS SPECIAL HELPERS IN PAST YEAR

Lucille Fisher, resolution and by-laws chair, read courtesy resolutions at the annual meeting thanking a number of people and businesses for special help to the Society in the past year.

They included:

O'Neal Construction Co.
Karen O'Neal
Bentley Library
Pauline Walters
Galen Wilson
Copy Mart
Deborah Hildebrandt
Gary Kuehnle of G.B. Kuehnle Co.
Don Faber, Ann Arbor News
Patricia Austin
David Evans, Michelle Smay & Craig Hoerschmeyer of Quinn Evans-Architects
Dr. Jim Wilkins
Versile Fraleigh of Fraleigh's Landscape Nursery
Frank Johnson of Robertson-Morrison Heating and Cooling
Mike Krueger of Al Walk Plumbing
Sandy Miller of the Plumbing and Mechanical Contractors Association
Fred Hamilton of K & P Electric
Cheryl Elliott and Terry Foster, Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation
Prof. Marshall McClennan, Eastern Michigan University
Prof. Ted Ligibel, EMU
Susan Wineberg
Louisa Pieper
Julie Truettner, Tom Bantle and Barbara Krueger, EMU students who helped prepare the National Register nomination for the WCHS museum.

GLB HELPS WCHS EARN $1,655 AT ART FAIR

Thanks to Great Lakes Bancorp and yeoman efforts by Pauline Walters and Pete Rocco and their crew of helpers, WCHS earned $1,655 parking cars at the Art Fair July 19-22 in spite of being almost rained out one night.

Great Lakes allowed us to park cars in their downtown lots after hours and Saturday. Pauline lined up helpers and made signs. Pete got the crews started with change aprons and signs and collected money and equipment at closing time.

A big thanks to Pauline and Pete and the following helpers:

Rosemarion Blake, Letitia Byrd, Patty Creal, Elizabeth Dusseau, Elsie Dyke, Lucille Fisher, Mike Gerdenich and Ina Hanel, Bets Hansen, Doug Kelley, Nancy McKinney, Jay Snyder, Julie Truettner, Susan Wineberg and Betty and Bob Wurtz.

PAT AUSTIN, NOT NANCY DREW, SOLVED A MYSTERY

Early Sunday morning after the Art Fair, the WCHS phone line rang into Immediate Past President Pat Austin's house.

It was the Ann Arbor police. They had two women in their office who could not remember where they had left their car the day before. After looking in vain they had given up and rented a hotel room overnight.

The only clue they had was a slip of paper they had been given that said *"Washtenaw County Historical Society"* on it. When Pat told them we had parked cars at Great Lakes Bancorp the case was solved.

DR. HILDEBRANDT TO TELL WCHS ABOUT INTERURBANS

Dr. H. Mark Hildebrandt, a founding member of the Ann Arbor Train and Trolley Watchers, will talk about the once popular forms of transportation at the first WCHS meeting of the season, Sunday, September 10, at Kerrytown Concert House, 415 North Fourth Avenue.

A native of Ann Arbor and a pediatrician by profession, Dr. Hildebrandt has been interested in transportation history since fifth grade.

PLEASE NOTE: The meeting is the second Sunday of the month to avoid conflict with the Old West Side House Tour the 17th. The meeting is open to the public free of charge.

SUSAN WINEBERG TO HEAD WCHS IN 1995-96

Susan Wineberg, WCHS board member and co-author of *Historic Buildings, Ann Arbor, Michigan,* 1992, Second Edition, was elected president of WCHS at the annual meeting. Immediate past president Patricia Austin presented her with the Society gavel.

Also elected were Judy Chrisman, recording secretary, Patty Creal, treasurer, and Alice Ziegler, *Impressions* editor. Later, Ina Hanel accepted the vice-presidency and Carolyn Mohai agreed to be corresponding secretary.

Elected to three year terms on the board were Rosemarion Blake, Olive (Bets) Hansen, Arlene Schmid and Esther Warzynski.

OCTOBER 15 SPEAKER

Karen Jania, technical library assistant at Bentley Historical Library and resident genealogist there, will talk about *"Strategies In Doing Genealogical Research,"* at the WCHS meeting at the library Sunday, October 15.

SHARON TOWNSHIP BUS TOUR:

GIVES GLIMPSES OF 19TH CENTURY WASHTENAW

Professor Ted Ligibel asked June bus tourgoers to pretend they were entering an earlier time zone as they headed west from Ann Arbor on Scio Church Road to Sharon Township at the far west edge of the county.

The tour focused on the rural "human landscape" and things that have been there a long time, in some cases 160 years or more. Sharon Township itself was founded 161 years ago.

Ligibel and Robert (Rocky) Ward, both professors of geography at Eastern Michigan University, specializing in historic preservation, led the tour. Professor Ward joined the tour from his home at 18594 Grass Lake Road in Sharon.

"Nothing is natural anymore, completely natural. I doubt whether there are any virgin stands of anything except maybe some little wetlands," Professor Ligibel said.

"All of the landscape has been completely and utterly changed by humans. Even if we decide to leave something natural, that's a human choice. Otherwise it's going to get altered and destroyed."

They passed an abandoned farm with "a house virtually enveloped in shrubbery, a barn collapsing. My guess is that it is probably zoned commercial and within five years we'll probably see a little strip mall there."

"It's lovely to live in the country but everybody wants to move out there. They buy two or five or ten acre parcels to build a house on but if everybody moves to the country then it isn't country anymore.

"People don't like to give up their amenities--shopping, gas stations, mini-marts and video stores so it gets very difficult to control. Before you know it you've got another city.

"Then people move out a little bit further."

"We'll see a couple of sand and gravel companies. That will speak to the glacier that was here 10,000 to 12,000 years ago.

"That really has everything to do with why the landscape looks as it does including what species of flora and fauna will live and thrive here.

"On the right is one of the finest remaining cobblestone farm houses {4944 Scio Church Road} in the county, the old Rufus Knight home, now the home of Deane Baker, a regent of the University of Michigan. We think 1849 is the date of that one.

"We're kind of high here. You can see the haze over the hills--it sort of reminds you of the Smokies. "Noting a tree canopy over the road, he said, "They haven't cut the trees back to the fence line which is often the case.

Photo by Ina Hanel

The former Howard Parr home, 5450 Sharon Hollow Road, is a beautiful example of high Victorian architecture. Before the Parrs had it, Henry Ford bought it for his manager at the nearby restored mill.

"There are a number of old farm homes along here--frame, brick and stone. We still have a nice sense of the early townships."

Someone noted that Scio Church Road is on the line between townships--Lodi on the left, Scio on the right.

A little barn on the right he thought was a blacksmith shop. "Notice the original hand wrought hinges."

He noted a farmstead on the right with the house a mix between Greek Revival and Italianate, probably dating about 1862 or '63.

They paused in front of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church near Strieter Road.

"This is a development here which geographers call a hamlet. It is a very small area of habitation, maybe three or four houses and some kind of public oriented building--a church or town hall. Often there is a store.

"We will go through Sharon Hollow which is a true hamlet where you can still see the former store building and the mill. This one revolves around the church.

"The soaring elements of the brick Gothic style church are really the hallmark of the Gothic style. The tall spire and the pointed arches over all the doors and windows are meant to lift the eyes toward heaven. You can see the spire, which sticks up above the tree line, a long ways.

"The cornerstone, really a date plaque, above the door says 1870 and the church name is in German.

"If you ever wanted to be transported into a Victorian environment, here it is in the church cemetery. You are looking at the height of Victorian architecture as expressed in stone with all the wonderful little towers, urns, finials and caps."

"This delightful little wrought iron fence is a rare survivor. In larger cities the rip-off artists would have been here 20 years ago. Part of it may be cast but much of it is wrought."

Beyond Strieter Road, he noted "a magnificent Italianate house on the right. This is an early one--the hallmark of that is the fairly simple paired brackets at the roof line. It looks more like they were cut on a jig saw than a lathe."

He called attention to the split fieldstone base of a barn.

"Because of the glacial ecology, farmers here were stuck with all these stones. They had to do something with them so they built stone fences, houses and foundations. You'll still see quite a few of them here and there.

"These hills are all remnants of the glacier as it melted. If you have driven down into Ohio you know how very flat it is. All that dirt was pushed away by the glaciers all the way down to Cincinnati. So that is all of our dirt from here.

On a big barn on the right, way up in the gable above two closed windows, barn markings, cut outs in the form of a German cross, could be seen. "We'll see them on several barns."

Rubena Schneider who now lives on the Staebler homestead, 8275 Scio Church Road, greeted tourgoers. She said her husband was born there in 1913 and she, herself, has lived there since 1942.

"The grandfather of the late Edith Staebler Kempf, a former WCHS president and benefactor, was born on this farm." She showed a picture of Mrs. Kempf and Neil Staebler, also a descendant of the original Staeblers.

WCHS President Susan Wineberg said the Staeblers first arrived in 1831. "Michael Staebler whose name is on the plat maps was born here in 1843 so we think at least some of the farm buildings date from the 1840s."

"We'd like to know more about these farms and the barn markings. The markings seem to be concentrated along today's route," Susan added.

"We saw the barn markings on 19th century barns. We don't see them on later gambrel roof barns," Prof. Ligibel said.

"When the Staebler family had a reunion in 1985 they all came to the Old German Restaurant, which is now part of our history. Then they asked if they could come out to take a look around. The Schneider's said "Sure, come on out."

Mrs. Schneider said the red building on the south side of the road used to be a blacksmith shop with a room above it where they fixed carriage wheels.

Another building, which was mostly for storage, had two little Gothic openings up in the peak. "They used to call them dovecotes. People gathered the eggs and ate the doves."

Rubena said there was still a box up there where the doves could go but they stuff something up there to keep the birds out.

"I would guess these buildings are 1850s, the big barn probably a little later," Prof. Ligibel said.

"Have any of you been to Monticello, Thomas Jefferson's home? Remember that lane behind the house where they had all these little industries? I maintain we have a similar thing going on here and at another place we'll see later.

"I think certain farmsteads took on certain roles like this one where, obviously, you came to have your horses shod, your wagons fixed and wheels made. The building with doves was some other type of farm industry.

"The Porter farm we'll see later is a similar kind of situation. I think it is like the second generation of farming industry and how people altered the landscape to fit their needs."

The bus was still on Scio Church Road but after passing Parker Road, Freedom township was on the left and Lima on the right. Susan passed out copies of a map of Sharon Township from the 1874 county atlas.

"Look at the grid plan," Prof. Ligibel said. "After the land ordinance of 1785 all western territories, including Michigan, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Wisconsin, were all laid out on this grid plan.

"The Federal government established it for surveying and laying out townships and counties and it's all rectilinear. Everything is at right angles even though it doesn't always work that way.

"So almost all the roads we travel on are what they call section line or county line roads. In Milan, for example, County Street is on the border between Washtenaw and Monroe Counties.

"Section line roads are laid out every mile. There are 36 sections in each township. That's 36 square miles--six miles by six miles. That system marched across the country all the way to the west coast.

"These are the first areas where those surveys were established in the 1820s. The very first place those surveys were used was in Ohio right along the Ohio River."

WHEN DANCERS WERE STUCK IN THE MUD

Longtime Sharon resident Don Irwin told Prof. Ward that the dance hall that used to be at the Washburne Place was dragged up to Grass Lake Road to a property just west of his.

People would come to the dance hall from Chelsea on Saturday night. When they got their cars stuck in the mud, his dad would go out with a team of horses and, at a price, pull the car out.

"The road curves. I'm not sure why, maybe a sink hole. Wetlands may be difficult to get over. Some roads were trails starting from Indian trails or deer tracks."

"Sutton Lake, near Scio Church and Guenther Roads, we think, is an old wetland . It's not on a 1937 map. It was dammed up and created."

Of a farm building on the left with an opening on the end, Prof. Ligibel said, "I would bet it was a blacksmith shop. I think the blacksmith building Rubena showed us probably originally faced the road and was turned, because blacksmith shops often had the gable end facing the road.

"The Ann Arbor influence has pretty well waned out here--no big subdivisions yet,--but if the current march of progress continues it's very possible.

"We like these townships the further we get out here because they are so original. You've seen the map that Susan passed out, that Prof. {Emil} Lorch did back in 1947 for what he called the fourth annual tour. We are kind of retracing those steps today.

"I think you can see why this area intrigued him because of its natural scenic beauty. I would guess that by the time he did this map this road had just been paved with some sort of macadam surface."

"Notice the undulations in the road. I've driven between Detroit and Jackson many times and I think this is one of the prettiest drives in the state."

He called attention to a small gable barn on the left with barn markings. "With an opening at each end it was probably a carriage barn. The markings may be just for ventilation but birds roost in them."

He noted an 1860s farmstead to the left.

"In the 19th century this whole area was known across the country for its sheep and wool production. Many people likened it to the beautiful hills in England, Ireland and Scotland and, indeed, the area just west of here is called the Irish Hills. They named it that because the rolling hills were so reminiscent of their homeland.

He noted some peonies blooming and commented, "They were one of the flowers of choice of 19th century farm families."

"Here's a barn without a house but you can tell there was a house there. The remaining flora is a dead giveaway. You'll have two pine trees in the front yard or lilacs or an ancient maple tree. It might have irises, day lilies, poppies seemingly growing wild that were actually from the farmer's garden.

"If you find a big stand of lilac or honeysuckle they were probably standing around a privy."

AT M-52, Chelsea-Manchester Road, they went left {south} into Sharon Township.

"Notice how you can see in the distance something that looks like a large hill. That is actually part of a system they call the Sharon Short Hills.

"We're in this glacial topography. We tried to pin down where that name came from but we couldn't ever find it. The name has been in existence since the township was created in 1834.

He noted a "sad case" on the left of a farmstead falling into ruin before they came to Lehman Road. "An absentee landlord rents the house and cares nothing about the rest of the complex."

"We will stop at the farm of the last remaining Leeman--Mary. {The name, originally Lehman, was legally changed by her forebears to Leeman to Americanize it so Mary Leeman lives on Lehman Road which was named for her family no doubt.}

"Notice that we have hit a dirt road. A lot of students think dirt roads are a sign of backwardness but we cherish them."

"Now we are getting into the thick of it. Notice the hills on either side and the closeness of the trees to the road. This tree on the right is into the road. It would not be allowed on a state or federal highway. Look at the size of some of the oak trees, some as old as the township.

"The Leeman property was first purchased about 1836 from the Detroit Land Office by a Captain Davidson of New York State. He kept it for approximately 30 years. A home was built on it probably by 1840, certainly by 1842. It's probably the third oldest building in the township and has been very well preserved.

"It came into the Leeman family in 1867

Photo courtesy of Rubena Schneider

Looking west at the original Staebler homestead, 8275 Scio Church Road, undated but when it was a dirt road and a windmill (in house yard) pumped the water. After the Michael Staeblers moved to Ann Arbor, three generations of the Schneider family have lived there to the present.

Photo by Susan Wineberg

The group that went on the WCHS annual bus tour. This year they explored Sharon township at the far west edge of the county.

just after the Civil War and became a centennial farm in 1967. It's made of cut stone and slag--most of the walls are about 18 inches thick, at least the ones I've seen.

"It was covered with stucco made from sand that was picked up locally. It was mixed with milk because they thought that would keep the stucco from expanding and contracting. The stucco has remained in very good shape for this extended period of time.

"The oak shutters are original. They have Roman numerals cut into the back so, if you take them off, they can be put back in orderly fashion and fit well.

"The interior of the house remained virtually unchanged. The floor boards run full length, some are 20 inches wide. They are generally made of oak, but some are whitewood. It was out of the Leeman family for a while. Mary Leeman bought it in 1971 and took on the project of restoring it.

"The gardens in back still have some original shrubbery. According to written records the shrubbery came on a flat bed wagon out of Detroit and has been there well over 100 years."

Unfortunately, Mary Leeman was unable to be home at tour time, he said. She and Don Irwin are considered the historians of the township.

The bus went slowly by another farm with a Greek Revival building that originally was a house. It had an inset porch. "I think it is still in the hands of original family members."

The barn had a gambrel roof--"it's a scientifically designed roof by state universities to make a bigger hayloft.. They became very popular."

Of a wetland they passed, he said, "We do know that the early farmers turned their cattle loose into wetlands and let them eat wild rice."

"I just love this road. You can't believe you are such a short distance from the city. When Rocky and I did our initial survey we felt as if we had stepped back in time."

They passed a "giant pig farm" on the left. A German cross barn mark could be seen high in the gable of the barn. "We are heading for Rocky Ward's and he has a barn mark we can see up close."

"He's going to talk about a farm building he saved and he's got some magnificent views. You can see Chrysler's Chelsea Proving Grounds from his barn."

Prof. Ligibel noted a former house site on the left with a spruce tree. Then they came to Prof. Ward's place, {18594 Grass Lake Road}, stopped and got out.

Prof. Ward said, "What you are going to look at is one poor person's attempt to preserve something on the landscape that was here a while ago.

"We have about four acres--it was cut out of 160 acres. The original deed went back to 1835. It was purchased by a man from Herkimer County, New York, named David Sprague. The deed was signed by Andrew Jackson. I have a copy of the deed in the house.

"The property was sold in 1842 to a Robert Titus, also from New York. Sometime in the 1840s the first house was built probably on the site of the house that we now own.

"This is not the original house but if you look at the foundation, I venture to say it is the original site. The 160 acres took in the barn complex which I don't own. I wish I did, or maybe I don't, because the maintenance cost is outlandish.

"The property was sold in 1868 to Andrew Servis, a blacksmith, and it was in that family for about 60 years.

"Grass Lake Road has been here from the earliest plat map I have seen. I don't know when it was originated but probably in the 1830s.

"When we purchased the home in 1970--which shows I'm a real newcomer by local standards--we began to fix up the house. I had always wanted some older place on my property. I thought about dragging over a school. I thought about an older barn but I ran into obstacle after obstacle, often based on cost.

"I met a man on M-52 who was going to tear down an old barn. It was dilapidated and there was no way it was going to be reconstructed. There also was a small carriage house on the property so we salvaged materials from them.

"We took the stone foundation out of the barn on M-52. I hired two contractors, the Toth brothers,, who have done historic reconstruction and although they had never constructed a building before they took on this project. They had primarily been in furniture before.

"It was quite an experience for them and me. By anybody's standards they are two characters but I was comfortable with their work.

"The building is certainly not authentic--there are nails in it but all the wood is original. A lot of it had hewed beams, some of it is pegged. I'm sure some of the materials go back 150 years. I'm really pleased with it. It is my retreat. He then showed tourgoers his building.

"Grass Lake Road jogs a little. Conceivably it was an Indian trail. It goes to the village of Grass Lake in Jackson County.

"As soon as we get onto the gravel portion there is a nice farmhouse that's being kept up pretty well on the right.

"You can see a couple of new home sites ,"Prof. Ward said. "This land was part of a 40 acre parcel. We have a ten acre minimum out here so you have to buy ten acres to build a house. Land is selling fast for $6,000 an acre."

"We have a tremendous amount of wildlife, deer all over. We have deer accidents out here constantly. We also have a lot of hunters."

He pointed out the old Cyrus Raymond place on the south side of Grass Lake Road. It was vacant a couple of years ago when a young couple bought it and are doing some interior work.

"It's Greek Revival, sort of loosely trans-

lated. The strongest element would be the beautiful portico over the front porch. These are original columns--woodpecker holes and all.

"Prof. Lorch noted the porch and the octagonal columns and mentioned that this house was photographed for the Historic American Buildings Survey of the 1930s. It's probably one of the most substantial houses in the township."

At the fork where Grass Lake Road branches right, the tour went left on Sharon Hollow Road, stopped briefly to view the Don Irwin farm complex, a sesquicentennial farm that goes back to 1836. The barns are on one side of the road, two houses on the other. Don was out plowing at the time.

Straight ahead was the Irwin School which had been moved to its present site. Don's niece now lives in the school. Lorch dated it 1849. It doesn't look like an old school to Prof. Ligibel.

He called attention to a massive oak tree in the middle of the field being plowed. "It was common for farmers to leave a large tree in the center so they wouldn't have to unhitch the horses and go all the way back to the house for lunch or a break."

"There aren't many such trees left. Farmers nowadays are sitting up in air-conditioned cabs listening to music or something."

They turned right on Washburne Road. One of the original one-room schools used to be on the northeast corner.

"Ahead on the right is a large hog farm that belongs to Steve Rose who also has a place on Lehman road," Prof. Ward said. Steve has a large livestock enterprise--he has land in other counties too. He also owns the farm with the stone barn which we will visit."

Prof. Ligibel called attention to a tree line, an old fence row. Some farmers planted hedges like the English do to keep the cattle in. You are looking at a remnant hedge of Osage oranges that have grown up into trees. Notice how they are interlaced together--that's one of the key reasons they planted them.

They stopped in front of the old Amariah Hitchcock farm, more recently known as the B.F. Washburne place. It was commonly known in the 1930s, '40s and '50s as the pink palace. It was a massive Italianate style home covered with stucco that they painted pink."

"Under the stucco it was made of adobe blocks like the early Washtenaw architect-builder Stephen Mills used. It is now gone. When the stucco deteriorated it literally melted away from what we hear.

"One quite amazing thing about this property is that it has all remained intact at about 580 acres since it was settled.

"In the grid system, a section of land is

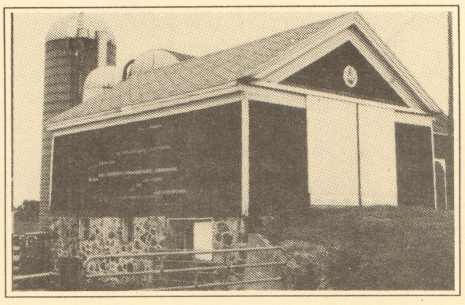


Photo by Ina Hanel

Now a tractor shed on the Kuhl farm, 19732 Pleasant Lake Road, it once was a school where Sharon Township was organized in 1834.

640 acres. Most people didn't buy that much. The section was often cut in half two or three times. Eighty acre plots were fairly common, some got 160 or 320, some only 40 acres.

"There used to be a dance hall at the Washburne place with live bands that came in. There also was an art studio in one of the small outbuildings.

The Washburnes had a substantial concrete mailbox that is still there. The name "B.F. Washburne" is on it, the year "1930," "U.S. Mail" and there is a Masonic emblem on the back.

VINTAGE POUTIN' HOUSE

When Prof. Ward was building his little barn of original salvaged materials a neighbor, Don Irwin, came down. "He is 80-some years old and he drives a truck. He never exceeds 25 miles an hour."

"He pulls up and he says, 'Rocky, what are you doin' here?'

"I said I'm trying to preserve a bit of history."

"He asked 'What are you going to do with this thing?'

"I said I really hadn't thought about it but it might be a nice place to go out in the afternoon to think I am Thoreau, overlook a wetland and meditate."

"He said, 'Rocky, I know what you are doing. You are building a poutin' house.'

"I scratched my head a little bit."

"He said, 'Yeah, you know--it's where you go when the old lady gets on you and you have to go and pout.'"

"Now I know why I built it. He was right."

The bus turned left {south} on Jacob Road, named for a Jacob family. At the intersection, Prof. Ward called attention to the former Weeks brothers homestead and noted that they had had a sawmill. After the two unmarried brothers died about five years ago there was an auction there that lasted about three days.

"Ted, being our architectural historian, will tell you about the house."

"It is probably two or three houses put together. The central block on the left portion is the earliest, we think. It has Greek Revival characteristics--the wider eave board and eave returns. Then you have a wing section to the right and a huge dormer sticking out.

"At some point, someone gave that entire section a gambrel roof, not unlike the barn. People often just kept adding on as the family grew. You are looking at an evolution of a property over a 75-90 year period.

"Notice, too, the windmill, still in its original configuration. You don't see many of those anymore.

The Porter-Keeler-Esch house and barn on Jacob road was on Lorch's 1947 map. "The little stone barn there is, in my opinion, the neatest building in the entire township," Prof. Ligibel said.

Lorch found the stone barn in good condition but it is deteriorating now. It bears an 1853 date in the gable. The tenant there now was told the barn actually pre-dates that. The individual who owns it doesn't appear interested in historical significance, at least to the point he would put money into it.

"There is no other barn in Michigan like it, that I know of, anyway. It is very much like an English coaching barn. The horse stalls are all still there and the interior is whitewashed. Hand wrought hardware is still hanging up. A shaky stairs leads to the second floor.

"Generally the barns built by the English or Germans had the openings on the longitudinals. This barn has openings on the ends.

"Where the house is now, there used to be a beautiful little Greek Revival temple house with columns in front. Before it burned down the Historic American Buildings Survey did measured drawings of it and also of the barn.

"If you look straight ahead you can see the bus is on an old lane. On either side of the lane were a series of outbuildings that we believe were related to early agricultural industries, like Rocky said, a plantation, not unlike Jefferson's Monticello where you would have weavers in one, coopers in another, a blacksmith, maybe people carding wool in another.

"There were two, maybe three buildings on the right like one still standing on the left. These were gable-fronted buildings, like the stone barn, facing the lane. Now, you have to get out in the weeds to see the old foundations. Normally, farm buildings are spread out in rectangular fashion around

the perimeter.

"We don't have any documentation about this farm industry or plantation but we are seriously looking for it.

Matthew Porter is the earliest owner of record during the time the buildings went up. Then it went into the Keeler family. When Lorch was here it was owned by a family named Esch and now by Steve Rose.

RACE WENT TO THE SWIFT IN NAMING TOWNSHIP

"The township was named after Sharon, Connecticut," Prof. Ward said. "When it came time in the early 1830s to select a name there were differing opinions. One prominent citizen got his family to contact all the people with a petition to name it Sharon.

"When the competition realized what was going on, they also got on their horses to get signatures for their choice, Romulus. The man promoting Sharon got to the Courthouse first."

"It says 'Matthew Porter, Esquire,' on all the early accounts and maps. We take that today to mean a lawyer but it's an old English term meaning gentleman of some standing in the community.

"A U.S. agricultural census 21 years ago stated that this county had the largest sheep population of any county east of the Mississippi River. We have had sheep in this county probably going back to English settlement. There are not that many anymore. The old sheep farmers are giving up because they can't find a market for their sheep."

From Jacob Road the bus turned west on Below, passing a little yellow brick school on the south side that had been converted to a residence.

There are two sources for clay for brick in the township, Prof. Ward said. The yellow is from Grass Lake. On the east side of the township, it is red and came from Manchester.

Past the school, he called attention to a massive barn and a huge 1870s house which must have housed a big family. "There are at least two front doors."

"When I moved out here it was owned by the Herb Jacob family," Prof. Ward said. "He was treasurer in Sharon for decades. The family goes back a long way.

On the house, the corner boards or pilasters, the little pediments over the windows, field stone foundation and jig saw cut out trim were pointed out.

"Mr. Jacob died five or six years ago and they had a three day auction. He was quite a collector. A young couple out of Ann Arbor have purchased it.

"The Strahle house on Below Road, noted by Prof. Lorch, is a Greek Temple style with beautiful columns, magnificent front door with a cornice over the door and sidelights and pilasters. They call that a pedimented portico--the columned portion that sticks out.

"These are modeled on Greek temples from the old world. This was the style of choice proposed by Thomas Jefferson.

"Of course the Greeks had the first democracy or at least a well-known democracy. We had the second major democracy so it was only fitting that we adopt the style of architecture of the first democracy. That's what happened. Greek Revival style caught on all over the country.

"They were always painted white. They often had a winged portion off to the side. This was falling down five or six years ago but somebody has bought it and begun to restore it. There's a remnant of a windmill in the front yard.

"The porch is probably about a 1915 addition but notice how nicely done it is, small scale, tucked in a corner. To the left of the porch notice the cement block which is always a giveaway to a new addition or putting in of a basement.

"Notice the Austrian or black pines. We call these pioneer pines because people often planted them as a symbol of establishing themselves in their new homestead. Often there were two, planted on either side of a middle walk way. They are not a native tree so when you see them you know that somebody planted them.

"They were among the first trees brought into this area. The nursery industry was one of the first industries."

In passing, he called attention to remnants of a stone fence.

They passed a "quite elegant" farm of probably 1890s period. "The style we would call Queen Anne although there is a little bit of Stick styling and Eastlake ornamentation. Notice two little Victorian era porches, the bay window in the middle and the stone foundation.

"The barn is much later, probably from the 1930s. There are not many round arch roofed barns in this county.

"We are turning onto Prospect Hill Road--the county line. Jackson County is on the right."

"At the top of a hill we'll see the first of the style of farm house commonly referred to as 'hen and chicks.' This form of house with central high portion and wings on either side we have dubbed 'hen and chicks' because it reminds us of a mother hen with chicks under her wings.

"Now, I want you to take a look at this farm, 5409 Prospect Hill Road, because it's a rare example of Gothic style. Look at the red barns with very steep pitched roofs. Note the beautiful work on the house, especially the inset porch, with very finely detailed posts holding it up.

"It has a roof line that sweeps into a Gothic peak and a front bay window. This is late 1860s. We like to think of how it might have looked new with a picket fence and garden surrounding it. Sheep would have been grazing the front yard, 'mowing' it.

"The Gothic style was being built all over the East Coast. Two architects in particular, Alexander Jackson Davis and Andrew Jackson Downing were building it--they called it the Picturesque style. It would not have been painted white--earth tones came in.

"It was a period when they were trying to get away from the starkness and symmetry of the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival styles and trying for more naturalistic gardens of wild flowers. Notice the Gothic pitch to the top of the pickets--it was all part of the design.

"A man retired from Ford Motor Company owns it now and it is beautifully maintained."

They passed the Sharonville State Game Area.

In the hamlet of Sharon Hollow, the mill from the 1830s "is one of the earliest remaining in the county. It was rebuilt by Henry Ford in the 1930s. The Raisin River is dammed up to form the mill pond. The millrace is under the road and comes into the mill at the northern end. Little electric turbines are still turning to provide power.

"This was part of Henry Ford's village industries. He bought up old mills all over the place--Tecumseh, Brooklyn, Plymouth, Northville, Milan, Saline.

MANCHESTER BANK SHARED WEALTH WITH SHARON

"The Sharon Hollow wildcat bank, the story goes, shared its wealth with the Manchester bank. When the bank examiners came, they went to Manchester first to see what they had on deposit. Everything seemed to be fine.

"Then the people who had the bank here in Sharon Hollow, being in cahoots with the Manchester bank, took all the assets from Manchester and raced up to Sharon Hollow so when the examiner arrived they'd be able to show they had money in their vaults too.

"But the examiners apparently caught on and the Sharon Hollow bank was closed down."

"This is now a winery run by the Hawker family. It is open weekends. Much of the land by the mill pond has been purchased by the Nature Conservancy, a national group, to preserve it. It really is one of the prettiest spots in the county.

On the west side of Sharon Hollow Road were buildings that once housed a store and a wildcat bank. Up the hill the former Howard Parr home "is a beautiful example of high Victorian architecture with some Italianate and a little bit of Queen Anne. In

earlier years Henry Ford bought the house for his manager. Ford bought up a lot of land in southeast Michigan to experiment with soy beans. He became a pioneer in using them in plastics. A lot of people around here still remember him, a lot didn't like him.

They pointed out the Sharon Short Hills in the distance and the Mahlon Smith centennial farm {17123 Pleasant Lake Road} with a barn that Ted Micka {WCHS March 1995 speaker} worked to preserve.

A little sway-backed frame building nestled among other barns on the Paul Widmayer farm, [17920 Pleasant Lake Road], was originally a blacksmith shop down in Sharon Hollow.

In 1917 at Pleasant Lake and Sylvan Roads a church was blown down by a huge tornado [then called a cyclone] that blew through. A new town hall was built on the church site. The cemetery remained.

On the northeast corner, near the town hall, is a monument to President Lincoln and 24 soldiers from Sharon who perished in the Civil War.

On the south side of Pleasant Lake Road in the woods is a Greek Revival house listed on Lorch's map as the Dan Meyers house [18460]. They noted the beautiful fluted Ionic capitals and the Austrian pines in front.

Also on the south side is the brick B.H. Gieske house noted on Lorch's map.

Next they pointed out what is perhaps the earliest remaining frame building in the township, now a tractor shed on the Kuhl farm [19732].

It has double doors in front and a stone foundation. It was the schoolhouse in which the township was formed in the spring of 1834.

"They had to meet in a public building in order to vote to 'erect' a township as they called it. The building was then located about 100 yards down the road. It was later pulled up here and they built a brick school on the original site in 1890."

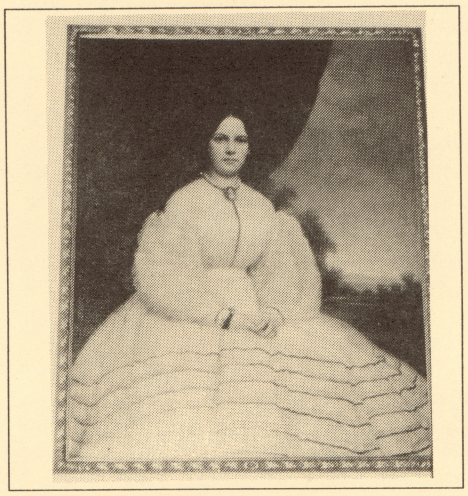
Of the early frame building, they noted the heavy cornice line, the eave board and the sort of squattiness which is so typical of Greek Revival.

Tourgoers then had lunch at what is now Sharon United Methodist Church at Pleasant Lake and Chelsea-Manchester Roads [M-52]. The church was dedicated as Salems Evangelischen Kirche at what is known as Rowe's Corners.

The German Evangelical denomination merged with the United Brethren Church in 1946. The EUB Church, in turn, merged with the Methodist Church in 1968.

After lunch they looked around the two cemeteries by the church, one belonging to the church, the other to Sharon Township, before heading back to Ann Arbor on Pleasant Lake Road and looking for a couple more barn markings along the way.

GARY KUEHNLE SHOWS SAMPLING OF WCHS COLLECTION



Photos by Gary Kuehnle

Portrait of Kate Dusenberry Dexter(1837-1864), first wife of Judge Dexter's son, Wirt, a Chicago lawyer. Kate was born in Fredonia (Freedom Township, Washtenaw County). She and her infant son, Samuel, both died in 1864.

"As Susan Wineberg alluded, the WCHS collection is like a great mountain," Gary Kuehnle, former collections chairman and certified appraiser of the G.B. Kuehnle Company, told the annual meeting.

"You climb a little and you slip back, you climb a little more and slip back. I won't use the word morass but it's an incredible collection of things from all standpoints--not only quantity but nice quality and some things that aren't of special quality."

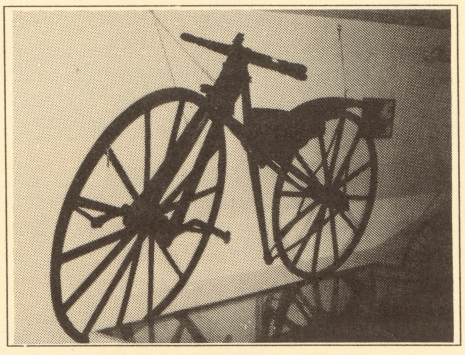
He showed slides of a few items with historical significance, some "very fine and some just plain interesting." Items included:

1. A country Queen Anne side chair with plank seat and sausage turnings, possibly as early as mid-18th century. "It would have had a rush seat originally. It is probably one of the earliest items in the collection."

2. "A really wonderful pair of Federal period andirons with ball and claw feet and a wonderful urn and column, 25-28 inches high. The proportion is extremely fine."

3. Tall case or grandfather's clock, late 18th-early 19th century, probably made in New England.

4. An American chest on chest, late 18th century, lamb's tongue detailing.



Rare early wood and wrought iron frame bicycle in WCHS collection, no easy rider.

5. Gothic Revival style arm chair, possibly a church piece, pictured in *Impressions* some years ago. High point of Gothic style, 1840.

6. Paintings of a couple, probably 1830-40 in original mahogany veneer frames.

7. A child's Windsor chair, late 18th century, from the Orange Risdon family who first settled Saline. Risdon also surveyed the old Detroit-Chicago Road (US-12). Gary is puzzled about the chair because "the Risdons came from Vermont but the chair has Pennsylvania legs."

8. Naval officer's hat in open case, probably mid-19th century. The case is japanned--in other words it has a diluted asphalt coating.

9. Portrait, 1820-30, mahogany veneer frame with Empire Style corner blocks.

10. Portrait of a little boy with some kind of deformity, 1850s-'60s, judging by his clothing. He only lived to be 4 so it may have been done post mortem.

11. "A nice portrait of two sisters, Empire style clothing, about 1830, probably done by an itinerant painter, original frame."

12. A pair of early Sheraton style console tables, "about 1800 because the form is extremely light. As the 19th century wore on the turnings would have gotten much heavier and finally disappeared into Victorian forms."

13. Pair of black cast iron andirons, about 30 inches high, with caricature sailors. "I've seen other caricatures but never sailors before."

14. A section of water pipe. "It's a wooden tree trunk, split, carved and put back together to carry water in early Ann Arbor."

There are a number of WCHS things on display at Kempf House, he said. They include:

15. A carved rosewood chair and a mahogany or walnut chair, upholstered as a pair and a marble top table which probably would have been a center table. They are in the library room, All are from 1850-70 and Rococo Revival style.

The table is stenciled on the bottom, "A.W. Tillman, Furniture Warehouses, Detroit" which doesn't necessarily mean it was made there but certainly sold from there. That qualifies it as a labeled piece which is a value factor."

16. Allmendinger parlor organ, made on First Street in downtown Ann Arbor, now on loan at Kempf House.

Mrs. Cash took the organ in at Treasure Mart in the 1970s and decided to give it to WCHS but we lacked storage. When a nice young couple wanted to buy it she let them take it free with the understanding that the Society would reclaim it when space was found.

Years later, when Kuehnle was collections chair in the mid-1980s, he located it and arranged for it to be moved to Kempf House. "The couple had refinished it and it is in wonderful condition."

17. Right next to it at Kempf House is "one of the greatest lamps you will ever in your life see." Floor lamp, 1880-90, originally kerosene, later electrified. Fringed shade, not original but of period.

18. Pair of Sheraton side chairs in Kempf House studio, carved mahogany, 1880-90, horsehair seats which may not have been original.

19. "This is called in our records {Governor} Stevens T. Mason desk. It's actually a lady's work table. It has ink stains in the drawer and I don't doubt that someone wrote at it but it really is a stand that would have been used in a parlor to hold sewing accoutrements. It's mahogany veneer.

"Mason, of course, was the boy governor. I'm not sure how this provenance came down to us but I know the state museum lusted after it for a while. It's still at Kempf house."

20. Painted tortoise shell fan known as Ann Allen's. She was the wife of John Allen, co-founder of Ann Arbor. She is one of the Anns for whom the city is named. "The fan is so typical of a lady of the period."

Dexter Museum also has some WCHS things on loan. They include:

21. Boneshaker bicycle, wood and steel, direct drive, no sprocket.

22. A lot of small everyday things that tell a story too.

23. Judge Dexter's bed, almost queen size in width, when most beds were three-quarter size. Cherry and maple, 1830-40.

24. Judge Dexter's Boston rocker, painted finish.

25. Portraits of Judge Dexter's son and daughter-in-law.

Gary did not yet photograph WCHS things on loan to Cobblestone Farm.

EFFECTIVE CORRESPONDENCE GSWC TOPIC SEPTEMBER 24

Stephen Keller, research chairman of the Detroit genealogical society, will talk about "Effective Genealogical Correspondence" Sunday, September 24 at Washtenaw Community College at the Genealogy Society of Washtenaw County meeting. The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. in lecture hall 2, Liberal Arts and Science Building.

WEBSTER FALL FESTIVAL SET SEPTEMBER 23

Big plans are afoot for the annual all-day festival featuring petting zoo, hay rides, entertainment, crafts, country store, quilt exhibit, rummage sale, antique cars, lunch and pig roast dinner. The restored one-room Podunk School and Wheeler blacksmith shop will be open. Hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

PLEASE KEEP COLLECTING KNAPP'S POINTS FOR WCHS

Thanks to all you folks who keep sending yellow slips from Bill Knapp's Restaurants we have 4,242 points toward more acid free boxes and paper to safely store textiles.

Anyone who eats at Knapp's may request a yellow points slip from the cashier each time, with one point given for each dollar spent. Please keep collecting and give or send to Alice Ziegler, 537 Riverview Dr., Ann Arbor , MI 48104.

CERTIFICATES OFFERED

Hand lettered certificates are offered free of charge, framed if desired, by WCHS to organizations for milestone anniversaries. Information: 663-8826.

'WHAT IS IT?' GAME OFFERED SCHOOLS, GROUPS

WCHS offers a traveling exhibit of small artifacts, set up as a humorous "What is it?" game to schools for children and another for adults. They are available for classes and meetings, subject to volunteer availability. Information: Arlene Schmid, 665-8773.

ARTIFACTS TO DONATE?

Anyone wishing to donate an artifact to WCHS should contact Judy Chrisman, collections chair, at 769-7859 or by mail, 1809 Dexter Ave., Ann Arbor, MI 48103.

HOW TO JOIN

Send name, address and phone number with check or money order payable to WCHS Membership, c/o Patty Creal, Treasurer, P.O. Box 3336, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-3336.

Annual dues are individual, $15; couple/family, $25; student or senior (60+), $10; senior couple (one 60+), $19; business/association, $50; patron, $100. Information: 662-9092.

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WASHTENAW COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

'INTERURBANS'

2:00 P.M. • SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 10, 1995

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